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SERVICING PROTOCOL: PROPOSED SERVICING TRIGGERS FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated May 31, 2007, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be circulated to the Clerks of the Municipalities of Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, King and Whitchurch-Stouffville to allow for further consultation.
2. Staff report back upon further consultation with local municipalities and the GTHBA/UDI representatives with recommendations on proceeding with site plan approval in advance of servicing allocation.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a framework for advancing site plan approvals, prior to servicing allocation being in place, with appropriate triggers for the stages of the site plan approval process.

3. BACKGROUND

There has been consultation through the spring and last fall regarding plans of subdivision and how to move them forward prior to servicing allocation becoming available. Through this recent consultation process, it was determined that there was also a need for a process to deal with site plans.

In terms of residential development, site plan approval is required for high density developments in all of the local municipalities. Often the development parcel has already been created through a previous plan of subdivision or a consent, but does not have servicing allocation. The site plan approval may be the last planning approval required prior to a building permit being issued, yet the servicing allocation has not been assigned.

Like the plans of subdivision, it is important to provide a process to continue to review and assess the site plan applications addressing all the relevant issues even when servicing allocation is not immediately available, so that desirable developments can be built when the servicing does become available.

High density residential development plays a key role in achieving intensification along the Regional Corridors and in the Centres, providing the densities necessary to support a viable transit system, and providing alternative housing choices. High density residential buildings will become increasingly important in accommodating a growing population within a limited land supply. It is therefore important that there is a process to deal with these types of applications and servicing capacity.

The process needs to recognize the differences between the development of high density residential buildings and ground related housing. For example, high density residential buildings have different construction timeframes than ground related residential buildings. It takes on average 4 to 6 months to build a single detached dwelling, but a high rise apartment can take 18 months to construct. Further, a high rise apartment cannot be built in phases, whereas a neighbourhood of ground related dwelling units can be.

Financing arrangements are also unique as pre-sales of about 70% are required to finance and construct apartments. Sales also occur prior to site plan approval or even prior to an application being made. These, among other aspects, need to be considered in determining an appropriate site plan process in terms of linking the site plan process to the timing of servicing.

A process is proposed that recognizes the different nature of high density residential development and the way site plans are approved, and provides for controls that address both pre-sales and building permits.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Local municipalities have adopted a range of ways for dealing with site plans given the evolving nature of the servicing allocation process. The objective in this report is to provide a common site plan approval and servicing allocation process.

4.1 Intensification Reserve

The first step in linking site plan approval to servicing allocation is to provide some certainty for future allocation. It is proposed that an “intensification reserve” provide an indication of what servicing will be made available in the future for such site plan applications.

The concept of the “intensification reserve” was introduced, in the March 7, 2007 report on the servicing protocol for plans of subdivision, as a reserve of future servicing allocation to be set aside for high density development with the recognition that there needs to be a balance between green-field development and intensification. An “intensification reserve” of 30% Region-wide was set for 2011 as an interim step to the 40% required in Places to Grow by 2015. Intensification is also required to meet the Regional objective of vibrant centres and corridors served by rapid transit. *Attachment 1*

illustrates the distribution of this minimum “intensification reserve” for each municipality. The minimum “intensification reserve” varies between municipalities based on their individual abilities to achieve intensification.

4.2 Proposed Site Plan Approval Process Linked to Servicing Allocation

Based upon the work done on the plan of subdivision servicing framework, which is also before Planning and Economic Committee at this time in a separate report, a site plan application framework is proposed that builds on the similarities in that work.

For instance, site plan approval “in principle” or conditional approval could occur in a similar fashion to draft plan of subdivision approval prior to servicing allocation indicating the local Council’s endorsement of the project. When servicing allocation is available, the application then could proceed to the next step which is final site plan approval. This would be similar to the final registration stage in the plan of subdivision case.

On the basis of the site plan approval process and anticipated high rise construction timeframes, it is proposed that the following site plan process be considered, for development serviced by the YDSS:

- Intensification reserve outlined in Column B of *Attachment 1* be used to endorse high density site plans, in principle within the Regional Centres and Corridors and/or Places to Grow built boundary as determined by local municipality.
- No-pre sales agreements and Holding provisions requirements be considered prior to local Council conditional endorsement of the site plan.
- Earlier release triggers be considered for allowing pre-sales and lifting of Holding provisions.
- Pre-sales could occur once final site plan approval is granted, or at an earlier point to provide adequate time prior to construction starting (ie. achieving the 70% sales).
- Holding provisions could then control the issuance of building permit with site plan approval in place – the hold would be lifted when it is fairly certain that the infrastructure completion target date can be met.
- Intensification reserve remains as a minimum and any of the approximately 70% set aside for interim Draft Approvals could instead be used for site plan endorsement as determined by local municipality.
- Separate and longer time frames for presales, construction, and allocation for high density residential site plan applications be considered.

Attachment 2 sets out an initial set of timeframes and trigger points for the purpose of consultation. Thorough consultation over the next few months will help solidify an appropriate process dealing with site plans which may result in modified timeframes and triggers.

4.3 Next Steps

Consulting further with the local municipalities and the development industry is the next step in the process. Through this consultation, this process will be refined and appropriate timeframes and triggers identified.

Newmarket Council adopted a report on April 30, 2007 recommending that that the Regional Municipality of York be requested to establish a servicing capacity reserve for high density, transit-oriented development in the Regional Centres, Regional Corridors, and Local Centres.

In response to Newmarket Council's request, consideration will be given to the establishment of an additional reserve beyond the "intensification reserve". This proposal will be more fully addressed through the consultation on the site plan process.

4.4 Relationship to Vision 2026

The proposed policy achieves goals of Visions 2026 in many aspects as it supports the objective of taking a strategic approach to growth management through more deliberate direction for future development which is co-ordinated with efficient infrastructure delivery.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The implementation of processes that allow appropriate development approvals to move forward is important to maintain a sufficient pool of approvals and avoid processing bottlenecks when servicing allocation becomes available. The proposed process also provides an opportunity to pursue high density applications at an earlier stage in keeping with the Centres and Corridors strategy.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

This process is intended to provide more certainty as to future servicing capacity for high density residential developments that are required to proceed through the site plan approval process. This will provide for additional flexibility for the local municipalities to support desirable site plan applications in advance of servicing capacity availability. Further discussion with the local municipal staff will help refine this process.

7. CONCLUSION

This report contains a proposed site plan approval process for high density development. A servicing protocol has previously been proposed for plans of subdivision, and it is now appropriate to consider a similar process for site plans so that the planning of high density development can be completed. High density residential development plays an important

role in achieving the vision for the Regional Centres and Corridors. Staff will consult with local municipalities and the development industry over the next few months to refine this process.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause are attached to this report.)